

“Run, Betsey! run for your life, and send Beaman’s folks back! I’m done for — my leg’s broken. Never mind. I’ll crawl under the sleigh, and be all right till you come. The wolves will take a good while to pick poor Buck’s bones.’

“Just waiting to see Joe safe, I ran as I never ran before, — and I was always light of foot. How I did it I don’t know, for I’d forgot to put on my moccasins (we did n’t have snow-boots, you know, in my young days), and there I was, tearing along that snowy road in my blue kid slippers like a crazy thing. It was nigh a mile, and my heart was ’most broke before I got there; but I kept my eye on the light in Hetty’s winder and tugged along, blessing her for the guide and comfort that candle was. The last bit was down hill, or I could n’t have done it; for when I fell on the doorstep my voice was clean gone, and I could only lie and rap, rap, rap! till they came flying. I just got breath enough to gasp out and point: —

“‘Joe — wolves — the big woods — go!’ when my senses failed me, and I was carried in.”

Here Madam Shirley leaned back in her chair quite used up, for she had been acting the scene to a breathless audience, and laying about her with her handkerchief so vigorously that her eyes snapped, her cheeks were red, and her dear old cap all awry.

“But Joe — did they eat him?” cried the boys in great excitement, while the girls held to one another, and the poor little wheel lay flat, upset by the blows of the imaginary demijohn, dealt to an equally imaginary wolf.